



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

THE DEACON IN THE DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE



Dear Friends

This leaflet provided by the Diaconate Formation Team, is giving an overview of the role, Vocation and Mission of the Deacon. Hopefully this will enable you to begin to look and discern whether you are already living out these qualities in your family/work and parish life, and whether you may be called to this Ministry.

An unmarried deacon would normally be over 25 and a married applicant over 35 years of age. At the moment the upper age limit is at my discretion.

Recommendation is from your Parish Priest to Fr Sean Hall, St Mary's, Forest Hall NE12 7AB Tel 0191 2684222. Further information can be found on the Diocesan Website under Services/Vocation/Diaconate.

With best wishes

+ Seamus

+Rt Rev Seamus Cunningham
Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle



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In our diocese the deacon is most visible when he assists the Bishop at a ceremony in the Cathedral - proclaiming the Gospel and assisting at the altar. The deacon is also very visible in his liturgical role in those parishes who have deacons assigned to them, but for the rest of the Diocese their role is less visible and certainly less understood.



This liturgical role is well defined: proclaiming the Gospel, on occasion preaching the homily, celebrating baptisms, weddings and funeral services. In these latter services the deacon will be involved in preparing families for these celebrations. However, the other aspects of the role

of the deacon are less understood and more flexible.

Traditionally the deacon is called to what is referred to as “charitable service”, something which finds expression in a number of different ways according to local circumstances across the diocese. Lay people are taking on key roles in ministries in many different areas and the deacon is not someone either to take the place of a lay person and their ministry, nor yet because “Father cannot do it”, as if they were a substitute priest. The Permanent Diaconate is a very specific part of the Sacrament of Orders. Underlying the servant leadership of the deacon is the need for people to be animated, to be enabled and fed, in their discipleship. Organising and supporting the pastoral care of the sick, the lonely and the isolated in a parish would be an example of such enabling. Offering spiritual chaplaincy to groups such as the SVP in their work would be another. Sometimes deacons take on chaplaincy roles in hospitals or with organisations such as the Apostleship of the Sea. A deacon may also have a diocesan role (e.g. leading a department) to which he is appointed directly by the Bishop.



As more and more parishes are clustered or amalgamated some deacons are appointed to a leadership role in a community where there is no resident priest. Here they live and work closely with parishioners and actively liaise with the parish priest who lives at a different church in the parish. Once again enabling and animating lay people in their own roles are key to what the deacon is called to do in such circumstances. Whenever a deacon takes on such a role he is appointed to his position by the Bishop, after consultation with local people, including the priest and dean in that parish or area. Should there be a change of personnel among priests the deacon continues in the role to which he has been appointed by the bishop. This means that when a priest is asked to move to a parish, or group of parishes, where there are deacons he needs to accept and work with those already in post.



All of these roles are simply giving concrete expression to what Vatican II's Constitution on the Church (*Lumen gentium*, 29) had to say about the role of the deacon, "It pertains to the office of a deacon, in so far as it may be assigned to him by the competent authority, to administer Baptism solemnly, to be custodian and distributor of the Eucharist, in the name of the Church, to assist and to bless marriages, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the sacred scripture to the faithful, to instruct and to exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funerals and burial services. Dedicated to works of charity and functions of administration, deacons should recall the admonition of St Polycarp, 'Let them be merciful, and zealous, and let them walk according to the truth of the Lord, who became servant of all.'"

